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ABSTRACT

After 10 years' experience, the Salem County Vocational Technical Schools (New Jersey) have had positive results from developing objectives annually and clarifying long range goals. The Salem County Board of Education's philosophy is to operate the district as a business would, defining its function as human service and its product as the people served. Modeled, then, on the planning used in business, the objectives are defined on the basis of student needs and those of local businesses and labor; needs are then translated into instructional objectives and modified by annual reviews made by the superintendent and the board. The district has developed a series of successful program indicators to aid their assessments. Yearly management objectives are also assessed and changed on the basis of evidence of program success. Through such management objectives, student attendance and placement have been positively affected, and district planning has been made more orderly. (JW)

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HOW TO SET GOALS FOR A SCHOOL SYSTEM

by: William H. Adams, Ed.D.

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Most successful private sector businesses measure their success by "profit margin." These same industries would not be in operation today if it were not for their mission being clearly defined. To implement the mission, statement requires the establishment of annual objectives and long range goals. In the education community, however, because the product is human, the establishment of management objectives and goals, is sometimes shunned because of the uniquenesses of the populations and the individuals that are served through our education system.

In New Jersey, since the passage of Chapter 212 of the Laws of 1975, public school districts have been required to set or work toward the achievement of both long range goals and annual objectives. Prior to the passage of this law, however, the Salem County Board for Vocational Education charged its Superintendent of Schools and staff with the responsibility to set long range goals based upon the Board of Education's philosophy and to establish annual achievable objectives that would have direct impact on the end product, the students that were served through the school district.

The Salem County Vocational Technical Schools is a special purposes district, providing much of the vocational, technical and special education training for the county. Through the school district on a multi-county basis, adult high school programs are operated as are special education programs for low incident handicapped persons from preschool age through adulthood. The district is small in terms of a total population of approximately 4,000 students who are served through it, however, its services are diverse, requiring definite direction and structure.

The Board of Education's operational philosophy is to operate the school district like a business. The business function being "service to people" and the end product being "the people served." To achieve this, the Board defined its philosophy and general goals with the assistance and the advice of the Superintendent. The Superintendent, in turn, established an advisory board of community representatives to identify community needs and those kinds of services within the Board of Education's philosophy and goals that were most appropriate. The Board also determined that those programs that no longer had meaning or

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or were no longer needed, should be phased out, while programs that needed to be modified or added to the curriculum should be considered based on community needs.

Community needs were defined, not only for the resident population, but also for the business, industrial and labor constituents. These needs were then translated into annualized objectives by the Superintendent through staff input. Once district objectives are set, individual division and building objectives are set. Objectives are then individualized at the classroom and/or support program level. These management objectives are stated in outcome terms and include activities to accomplish the objective and the evaluation method to determine the extent to which the objective was met. Finally, specific staff members are assigned responsibility to carry out the objectives.

As part of the annual evaluation of the Superintendent, management objectives that are set by the district, are assessed by the staff and advisory board and are finally reviewed and adopted by the Board of Education. This assessment is used as part of the annual evaluation of the Superintendent who in turn utilizes a similar process for each division and department. In addition to the management objectives that are set at the district building and program level, objectives are abstracted in student terms so that the direct impact on the student population can be measured.

During the 1983-84 school year, the district staff, the advisory board and the Board of Education reviewed the process in terms of what they called, Successful Program Indicators. In other words despite the fact that there were management objectives being achieved which were reflected in student placement and in the achievement, the Board of Education, wanted to take a look at just what makes the successful program. Parameters were set and success indicators identified by teaching staff, administrative and supervisory staff, advisory board and craft committees and finally the Board of Education. The successful program indicators identified by staff for vocational and technical programs included the following:

1. Level of student productivity and activity and participation.
2. Level of student attendance
3. Level of program enrollment
4. Level of student discipline
5. Level of student tardiness

6. Level of curriculum completion

7. Level of successful student placement

For special education students, the following program success indicators were identified:

1. Level of attitudinal development

2. Level of development of student basic skills

3. Level of development of student self-discipline and control

4. Level of student attendance

5. Level of student's emotional and social development

6. Level or number of students mainstreamed

7. Level of achievement of academic, vocational goals as specified in the student's individualized educational plan (IEP)

The above program indicators were selected from a list of some thirty-seven (37) indicators identified by staff and subcommittees of the district's General Advisory Board. These indicators were consolidated as follows, for approval by the Board of Education.

1. Student enrollment - enrollment sufficient for a quality educational program to be offered to students on a cost effective basis.

2. Attendance of students - student attendance consistant with "real world" business and industry standards (95% or better).

3. Student achievement - accomplishment by at least 90% of the students participating in programs of 80% of the skills designated in the curriculum and/or skills array. For special needs students, this would be measured against the IEP and/or IVP as may be appropriate.

4. Sequential completion by students of courses, goals and objectives as measured by:

    a. Completion of required skill units

    b. Appropriate attitudinal development

    c. Employability

5. Student motivation as measured by:

    a. Attendance

    b. Grades

    c. Discipline referrals

6. Continuous learning as measured by:

    a. Daily student activities

    b. Skill achievement

    c. Employability

    d. External assignments

7. Acquisition of basic skills for solving problems as measured by;

    a. Placement

    b. Discipline referrals

    c. Attendance

8. Student retension rate - A drop-out rate of no more than 2% of the students that enter the program per annum.

9. Placement of students - Placement rate equal to 90%. The accepted measure for vocational programs is to be at least 60% of the students entering related occupations with remaining students entering other employment, further education, military service and/or homemaking.

10. Development of attitudes and work habits conducive for employment as measured by:

    a. Discipline referrals

    b. Job placement rate

    c. Job retension rate after three (3) months on the job

Utilizing the Board of Education's philosophy, long range educational goals and the successful program indicators identified herein, annual needs are translated into management objectives. An example of management objectives set for the 1983-84 school year is as follows:

OBJECTIVE

1. It is proposed that efforts be expanded to increase linkages and cooperation with business and industry in order to provide for greater employment opportunity and for job promotion. To achieve this objective, it is proposed that the following activities be pursued:

   A. That continued discussions take place with employers to develop customized training programs, pre-training programs and advanced training programs. Specifically, it is proposed that:

      (1) Through continuing dialogue, with business and industry representatives, that a minimum of ten (10) customized educational programs be developed to meet the needs of area employers;

      (2) Based on identified need, that a minimum of three (3) pre-educational programs be developed so that employees from local industry can take advantage of training programs that are available through the employer and/or the school district;

      (3) That a minimum of two (2) advanced educational programs be developed for employers to assist employees with the transition to high technology changes.

   B. That all previous cooperative education employers be surveyed via a personal contract to determine:

      (1) The school's effectiveness with previous co-op students;

      (2) The number of previous co-op students employed on a full time basis;

      (3) The strengths and weaknesses of the school's curriculum;

      (4) The work attitudes of the co-op students.

   C. To involve more employers or their representatives on school program or craft advisory committees. This would be accomplished by:

      (1) Direct employer visitations;

(2) Employer visitations sponsored by the business and industry subcommittee of the Vocational Advisory Board;

(3) Employer visitations conducted by members of the business and industry subcommittee of the Vocational Advisory Board.

This objective will be assessed based on the successful implementation of ten (10) customized educational programs, of three (3) pre-training programs and of two (2) advance training programs for local business and industry. Further, personal contact with 80% of all former co-op employers along with the quality of the data received concerning co-op students, will be utilized to assess Section B of the objective. Finally, a total of three hundred (300) business and industry visitations will be expected by school personnel and/or advisory board members in the 1983-84 school year. The preceding represented one of nine (9) District Management Objectives set for the 1983-84 school year. It should be noted in this objective that in addition to the terminal outcome as presented in the general descriptor that there are subcomponents within the objective along with specific activities to achieve the objective and a method for evaluation. Space does not permit presentation of each of the nine (9) objectives set for the 1983-84 school year, however, in order to provide a better understanding as to how the assessment process works, an objective from the 1982-83 school year along with the assessment as approved by the Board of Education of that objective, is presented as follows:

OBJECTIVE

1. It is proposed that the effort to involve all staff in the placement of students continues to be a high priority and objective of the Board of Education. Further, it is proposed that specific concentration regarding placement of students be made as follows:

   A. That there be continuing efforts to provide coordination of placement and student follow-up and student follow-up activities.

   B. That the Cooperative Education Program be expanded to include:

      (1) Placement of at least sixty (60 students from trade and industrial programs through the Cooperative Industrial Education effort.

      (2) Placement of at least ten (10) Health Occupations students in Cooperative Education assignments during their final year.

(3) Placement of at least seven (7) Distributive Education students in outside work stations during their final year in the program.

C. That continuing efforts be made to increase the apprentice participation level. Further, it is recommended that this activity be vigorously pursued especially with small employers.

D. That the General Advisory Board and each craft committee become even more actively involved in assisting with the placement of students.

This objective will be assessed based upon an analysis of student placements and program drop-outs.

Assessment of the Objective

Beginning with pre-service meetings for all district staff, district employees were reminded of the importance of student placement and the need for each school district employee to become involved in this process. Further, during monthly administrative and teaching staff meetings, staff were reminded of the importance of placement of students and the resultant impact on future and existing programs and on future student enrollment.

Career Center staff participated in monthly job survival skill workshops as part of the effort to involve teaching staff more closely with the procurement of employment opportunities for students. The job placement coordinator was also required to work with individual teaching staff members in developing employment and job opportunities for students. Finally for the last school year, as part of each teaching instructor's professional improvement plan (P.I.P.) involvement with the placement of their students was made a high priority.

A. A definite pattern was established during the 1982-83 school year to coordinate placement efforts employer contacts and follow-up of graduates. It has been estimated by the Career Center Principal that a 25% increase was shown in this effort. Specifically, from September 1, 1981 to March 31, 1982, 117 employer contacts were made while for the period between September 1, 1982 and March 31, 1983, 175 employer contacts were completed.

B. The Cooperative Education Program was to be expanded in order to provide more opportunities for students prior to graduation. Past experience has shown that many students remain in co-op positions after graduation, therefore, this educational program has potential to increase placement opportunities. The Co-op Placement Coordinator did, however, not reach goals that were set. Specifically, the following is reported:

(1) Seventeen (17) cooperative industrial education placements were made, to date, for students participating in trade and industrial programs. A goal of sixty (60) students, however, was set for this area.

(2) Four (4) cooperative placements were made for students in the health and medical arts programs. A goal of ten (10) students had been set for these programs.

(3) Two (2) students were placed in cooperative distribution education employment programs. A goal of seven (7) students had been set for this vocational area.

While economic conditions were not favorable to the establishment of part-time employment of students during school hours, disappointment is expressed with the results of this program. As a result of this and budgetary restrictions, this program option will not be operating as a separate entity for the 1983-84 school year. The responsibility for implementation of this program will instead be divided amongst other properly certified personnel. More specific concentration will also take place made for co-op placement directly by the people involved in health and medical art programs and the distribution education program.

C. Apprentice students were increased by nine (9) during the current year. It was hoped that this figure would have reached twenty (20), however, no major employers in Salem County began new apprentice classes during the year and only a few small employers were willing to begin apprenticeship programs. Encouraging, however, is the fact that there are nine (9) additional applications for apprenticeships pending. Further, the district has been named as the apprentice center for Salem and Cumberland Counties by the New Jersey Association of Master Plumbers. This designation was achieved after year long discussions and negotiations.

D. As a major thrust of the General Advisory Board this year, responsibility was assumed by two different subcommittees to become involved with the placement of students. Members assisted in increasing employer contacts and reported direct employment opportunities to building principals who in turn relayed this information to the job placement coordinator and individual teachers. The foundation has been laid for continuing involvement of the General Advisory Board in

this important phase of the district's service to students. Job placement of students and development of employer contacts will be a continued priority with the County Vocational Advisory Board during the 1983-84 school year.

Placement figures for the Class of 1983 are not yet available, however, despite the present state of the economy and the difficulty that is occurring in placing students from building trades programs, the overall perspective is positive. This projection is made based upon the successful placement of Job Training Partnership Act participants who have already completed programs along with pre-employment commitments that have been made to remaining J.T.P.A. participants who will complete course work in May of 1983.

The information concerning drop-outs to date, includes no-shows for programs, as well as students who have left school for any reason including moving, employment or transfer to another district. At the Career Center for the 1981-82 school year there were fifty-five (55) students dropped from the roles while for the 1982-83 school year there were forty-eight (48) dropped from the roles for the same period. At the H. D. Young Center and Mini Mall for the 1981-82 school year there were twenty-six (26) drops and for 1982-83 for the same reporting period, twenty-four (24) drops.

At Project A.D.V.A.N.C.E. for the 1981-82 there were eleven (11) drops and for 1982-83 there were seven (7). At the Regional Day School only two (2) students dropped out thus far.

The drop-out rate for the same reporting period is lower this year in all cases. It should be noted that one impact on drop-outs has been the vigorous enforcement, especially since January 1, 1983, of the Board of Education's attendance policy. While this has helped keep many students in classes, it has also served to have other students not interested in attending vocational technical programs on a regular basis, withdraw from these programs.

In addition to the assessment provided above for this 1982-83 school year objective, supplemental statistical data was presented to the Board once it became available concerning the graduating class of 1982. Also because of space, only one example for a selected program area could be given. The actual preliminary assessment that was reviewed by the Board of Education in the spring of 1983 contained nineteen (19) pages of documentation for the eight objectives that had been set.

For uniformity purposes, the construction of the management objectives and the construction of the assessment tool is

important. Specifically, each objective contains a general descriptor sentence or paragraph stated as nearly as possible in behavioral terms. When appropriate, this is followed by subcomponents that are used to describe specific areas within the overall objective. Major activities or steps that will be taken to achieve the goal are then identified. This is followed by a descriptor as to what the expectations will be for each subcomponent. This part of the objective serves as the evaluation mechanism.

The Board of Education normally receives for preliminary review the succeeding year's objectives in April. Recently, however, this process has been somewhat modified so that the objective can be developed in concert with the district budget. This means, the following year's objectives must be available in preliminary form by January, preceding the start of the fiscal year in July.

The Board of Education oversees its preliminary assessment of objectives in May of the current year for which they apply. Final assessment is provided in September. Final assessment includes statistical data that was not available when the preliminary assessment was completed.

The assessment portion of the objective includes a brief narrative as to steps that were taken to carry out the activities. This is frequently followed by an identification of each subcomponent that was necessary in order to work toward achievement of the objective. Finally, an analysis is provided and when available, statistical data for objective measures is included.

As a result of almost ten year's experience in developing district objectives on an annualized basis, the process has been refined to the point where instead of the process being initiated from the Central Office, it is instead started at a school base level. The process is monitored through the General Advisory Board, refined and coordinated at the Central Office level and is approved and reviewed by the Board of Education. The resultant impact on the educational program and students served through the district has been positive. Through the use of management objectives and the activities to implement these activities, student attendance and placement has been positively affected as has been the reduction in drop-outs. The setting of management objectives in concert with the Board of Education's long range plans have also helped with an orderly process for growth within the district, facilities planning and budgeting.

The author, Dr. William H. Adams, has been involved in public education for the past nineteen years. He began his career in education as a teacher, continued as an Assistant Principal, Principal, and for the past eleven years has been the Superintendent

in the Salm County Vocational Technical Schools. Dr. Adams has been actively involved in vocational technical education and in education for the handicapped and disadvantaged both in his present position and in many of his professional activities.

For seven years, he served on the State Advisory Council for the Handicapped and for the last four years of that term was Chairperson. Dr. Adams has also served as Chairperson of the Balance of State Employment Training Council, serves on the Cumberland/Salem Private Industrial Council, has authored articles that appeared in Phi Delta Kappan, Education Unlimited, and in the ERIC Educational Resource System. He has also made presentations internationally for the Council for Exceptional Children, and nationally to the American Vocational Association and American Association of School Administrators.

Dr. Adams has been commended by the New Jersey Legislature for his work in the field of education and in 1980, was selected by the National School Boards Association and the staff of the Executive Educator as one of "The Top 100 Administrators in North America." Dr. Adams has also appeared in "Who's Who in the East." His educational background includes attendance at Temple University, baccalaureate degree in education, a masters degree in educational administration from Glassboro State College, and a doctoral degree from Rutgers University.